



United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service



News Release

Cooperating with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
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Results of a recent survey are contained in this release. You can also find it on our site at www.nass.usda.gov/pa/ and click on the Pennsylvania Publications link.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tillage Practices Released

HARRISBURG, PA, June 29, 2007 -- USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Pennsylvania Field Office has completed its first ever survey of tillage practices for field crops in the Commonwealth. The tillage survey was funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. It was conducted in conjunction with NASS's annual June Agricultural Survey. In order to address the problem of highly erodible soil and soil compaction many farmers have turned to no-till and minimum till practices. Previously there were no survey based estimates of how many acres had been converted from conventional tillage practices to alternative methods. Over the past few years several industry groups, including the No-Till Alliance, Conservation Districts, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation have requested that NASS's Pennsylvania Field Office provide information on the tillage practices used in Pennsylvania.

In 2007, conventional tillage was used on 29.2% of the major crop acreage in Pennsylvania. No-till was practiced on 50.4% of the major crop acreage, and other conservation tillage practices were used on the remaining 20.4%. Corn and soybeans are the two crops with the highest acreages. Conventional till was used on 29.0% of the corn acreage, no-till was practiced on 49.7% of the acreage, and the remaining 21.4% of the corn acreage used other conservation tillage practices. In soybeans, conventional till was used on 20.5% of the acreage, no-till was practiced on 63.6% of the acreage, and the remaining 15.9% of the soybean acreage used other conservation tillage practices. As with most of NASS's survey work these numbers will be subject to revision in June 2008. With more operators realizing potential advantages to no-till and other conservation tillage practices including reduced labor costs and increased water filtration, and as technology continues to change production practices, we anticipate that the mix of tillage practices will change. The PA Field Office will monitor changes in tillage practices as funding allows.

Pennsylvania: Tillage Practices by Crop, 2007

Crop	Total Acres Planted	No-Till ¹		Other Conservation Tillage ²		Conventional Till ³	
		Acres	% of Total ⁴	Acres	% of Total ⁴	Acres	% of Total ⁴
Corn	1,450,000	720,000	49.7	310,000	21.4	420,000	29.0
Soybeans	440,000	280,000	63.6	70,000	15.9	90,000	20.5
Barley	60,000	24,000	40.0	19,000	31.7	17,000	28.3
Winter Wheat ⁵	170,000	75,000	44.1	40,000	23.5	55,000	32.4
Oats	120,000	30,000	25.0	18,000	15.0	72,000	60.0
Total ⁶	2,240,000	1,129,000	50.4	457,000	20.4	654,000	29.2
Alfalfa Seedings ^{7/8}	-	-	21.4	-	21.4	-	57.1

¹ No-Till – A procedure whereby a crop is planted directly into a seedbed not tilled since harvest of a previous crop, or the planting of a crop into sod, previous crop stubble, or a cover where only the intermediate seed zone is disturbed. ² Other Conservation Tillage – Tillage practices prior to planting which result in a minimum of 30 percent ground cover or residue being retained on the surface following planting. Grass and weed control is accomplished primarily with herbicides. Includes ridge till, strip till, and mulch till. ³ Conventional Till – Systems where 100 percent of the surface is mixed or inverted by plowing, power tilling, or multiple disking. ⁴ Sum of no-till, other conservation tillage and conventional till percents of total may not add to 100 percent due to rounding. ⁵ Wheat seeded the previous fall for all intended purposes including grain, cover, silage, hay or any other utilization. ⁶ Total excludes Alfalfa Seedings. ⁷ New alfalfa seeded or to be seeded during 2007. ⁸ Alfalfa seeded acres will be available in January 2008.